

# Principles and Practice

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

# Principles and practice<sup>1</sup>

The following 12 general principles are recommended to Anglicans as a way forward for engaging with people from new religious movements.

1. *Clarity*: we need to be clear about our own Christian faith and the teachings and practice of the Church of England.
2. *Confidence*: confidence in the gospel enables friendship, engagement and faith sharing as well as any necessary challenge.
3. *Honesty*: we need to be honest about our own spiritual journey and any gaps or confusions in our own theological understanding.
4. *Knowledge*: we need to find up-to-date, accurate information about the groups we engage with and we need to be ready to hear people's own stories about their beliefs and practices.
5. *Respect*: we should offer respect and understanding for the spiritual explorations and choices made by others.
6. *Reserve outright judgement*: we should look for evidence of God's work in others and not try to second guess what God is doing.
7. *Humility*: we need to remember that Christianity was once a new religious movement and was tested in the same way as new religious movements are tested today.
8. *Empathy*: Christians have often been (and still often are) persecuted, misunderstood and vilified as some new religious movements are today.
9. *Vigilance*: we should be cautious and wary in engaging with movements and groups which we do not know. In particular, we should look out for false claims which could harm others and be aware that some religious movements do destroy lives.
10. *Charity*: provide care and help for those who may have suffered through contact with new religious movements, including families who have other family members in those groups. Where appropriate, make sure vulnerable people receive help and protection.
11. *Discernment*: use discretion to find out what a group wants and how it behaves.
12. *Distinctiveness*: be clear about the distinctiveness of Christian faith. The richness, variety and depth of what is offered in Christ should satisfy every part of a person's spiritual need and life pathway. If that does not happen, our mission and evangelism may be at fault.

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<sup>1</sup> These principles are derived in part from what chaplains and clergy at diocesan discussion days have identified as necessary to engaging with New Religious Movement groups in their own areas.